

## CLERK'S BRIEFING NOTE

### TRAINING STRATEGY FOR SEDLESCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

**1. QUALITY COUNCIL RE-ACCREDITATION.** Sedlescombe Parish Council is due to seek re-accreditation in July 2008. It is expected that, in the future, all quality councils will be required to demonstrate that they have developed, or are in the process of developing, a training strategy for members. The content of the strategy is to be largely at the discretion of individual councils, but should reflect a skills inventory, an analysis of training needs, local opportunities for training and the resources of the council, and include induction training for all new councillors.

**2. ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL TRAINING STRATEGY.** The Quality Parish Council training requirements appear to be in line with what is expected of district councils. Since July 2007, in connection with preparations for fulfilling the requirements of the South East Charter on Elected Member Development, Rother District Councillors receive a Personal Development Plan and there will be an expectation that all members will complete a training needs assessment document. Rother states that this will enable the Council to analyse what the training needs are of its elected members and to ensure that financial resources are targeted so that the appropriate training is provided as cost effectively as possible. Joint working with other local authorities in East Sussex on delivering generic skills training is planned. Rother is also working on an Induction Strategy for any new councillors. [Report to Rother Cabinet by Director of Resources, 19/02/07]

**3. RESOURCES.** The Sedlescombe Parish Council £500 annual budget for training has been under-spent for the last few years. The reasons are that appropriate local training has not been available and that, other than for initial training when they first join the Parish Council, councillors are not willing to undertake a round sixty-mile trip for a short training session. Councillors have attended Rother District Council planning seminars which provide excellent training at no cost to the parishes.

The Clerk/RFO does attend appropriate training sessions up to 30 miles away arranged by Sussex Association of Local Council, Society of Local Council Clerks and the Council for the Protection of Rural England and is involved in information-sharing meetings with other parish councils.

Sedlescombe Parish Council has suggested that NALC should produce a training DVD that can be distributed throughout the country and used by parish councils locally. This has been supported by local Rother Clerks.

In the September 2007 Local Council Review there was an article entitled "Learning online: e-libraries". The County Durham County Training Partnership has introduced an e-learning strategy offering business-related course libraries to parish and town councils locally. Each course takes about 30-40 minutes to complete. Three business libraries are available as follows: Business Essentials – 50 courses including meetings management, coaching, questioning, delegation, listening skills, recruitment and body language. Health & Safety – 14 courses including slips, trips and falls, health and safety at work, managing health and safety, etc. Workplace Legislation – 14 courses including freedom of information, Data Protection Act, race discrimination etc.

## **PROPOSAL**

### **4. COUNCILLORS' TRAINING.**

**4.1 Induction Training.** As soon as practicable after joining the Council, a parish councillor should attend an induction training session to familiarise him or herself with the general work of a parish council.

In addition, the Clerk will provide a Sedlescombe Parish Council Handbook to all new councillors updated every two years. The Handbook includes the following:

1. Miscellaneous information and maps
2. Code of Conduct for Members
3. Sedlescombe Parish Council Members and the Clerk/RFO
4. Standing Orders, Financial Regulation, Handling Complaints
5. Terms of Reference & Annual Schedule
6. Asset Register
7. Policies
8. Accounts
9. Planning Procedure
10. Details of leaflets and DVDs
11. Details of Sedlescombe Parish Council website [www.sedlescombe.org.uk](http://www.sedlescombe.org.uk)
12. Rother District Council Code of Practice with Town & Parish Councils 2007

**4.2 Induction Training Follow Up.** In order to keep up to date, parish councillors will be encouraged to undertake training. This may take the form of an official training session organised by a body such as the Sussex Association of Local Councils, be a more informal sharing of information with other councils or even in-house training.

**4.3 "In-house training".** The following subjects could form part of the training sessions:

- a. How the Parish Council manages Council Taxpayers' money.
  - i. The Council Tax Bill and how it is split up
  - ii. The RFO's job
  - iii. The councillors' job regarding finance
  - iv. Financial regulations
  - v. Internal financial control
  - vi. Risk Management
  - vii. Insurance
  - viii. Investments
  - ix. The budget
  - x. Quarterly financial reviews
  - xi. Internal and External Audits
- b. The Parish Council's planning policy.
- c. The purpose of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting.
- d. How to chair a meeting.
- e. Sedlescombe Parish Council Website.

In order to provide easy access to relevant training for councillors, the Clerk intends to build up a library of Powerpoint Presentations for showing locally. The presentations currently in hand are as follows:

Date	Produced by...	Title
August 2007	Standards Board	2007 Code of Conduct
July 2007	Rother District Council Chief Planning Officer	Development Control Practice for Town/Parish Councils
July 2007	Peter W Lacey FCA, National Association of Local Councils	Internal Auditing for Local Councils

**4.3 Planning Seminars.** Rother District Council's Planning Department arranges 6-monthly planning seminars at different venues across the District. Parish councillors should try to attend. The Parish Council has asked Rother DC to run evening seminars.

## 5. CLERK'S TRAINING

**5.1 Clerks' Training Days.** The Sussex Association of Local Councils and Society of Local Council Clerks arranges training days for clerks at different venues across the county every six months. The Clerk/RFO will try to attend these training days and to implement good practice.

**5.2 Clerks' Technical Issues Sessions.** Rother District Council arranges annual meetings for clerks with the Chief Executive and the Solicitor at which the technical side of current topics can be discussed in an informal meeting. The Clerk/RFO will try to attend these training days and to implement good practice.

**5.3 Meetings of Rother Clerks.** The Clerk/RFO should try to attend the Clerks' Quarterly Meetings held in Battle. These meetings allow a useful exchange of information and best practice methods amongst clerks. Sometimes speakers on relevant topics are included.

**5.4 Planning Seminars.** The Clerk will try to attend the Planning Seminars as described under councillors' training above.

## **6. SKILLS INVENTORY**

The Parish Council accepts that all parish councillors and the Clerk have skills to offer to the Council and the community. The following important skills have been identified:

- Financial acumen for the Clerk/RFO and members of the Finance Committee;
- Understanding the way the law regarding local authorities works for the Clerk/RFO and all councillors;
- Project management for the Clerk/RFO and some councillors;
- Manual dexterity for some councillors who wish to undertake minor maintenance for the Council (approved by Insurance Company);
- Presentational skills for the Clerk/RFO and some councillors;
- IT use for the Clerk/RFO and all councillors;
- Knowledge of planning strategies for the Clerk/RFO and members of the Planning Committee;
- Administrative skills for the Clerk/RFO
- Written Communication for the Clerk/RFO
- Chairing meetings for all councillors
- Dealing with the Media for the Clerk/RFO and the Chairman of the Council
- Public speaking for the Clerk/RFO and all councillors
- Report writing for the Clerk/RFO and all councillors

Councillors will be asked whether they need training to improve any of the above-mentioned skills in a way that will benefit the Parish Council or the community. If they do, enquiries will be made into how these needs can be met.

## **7. QUALITIES INVENTORY**

The Parish Council recognises that all parish councillors and the Clerk have qualities to offer the Council and the Community. The following qualities have been identified.

- Knowledge of the community
- Perceptiveness
- Resoluteness
- Affinity with nature
- Discernment
- Confidence
- Willingness to learn
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Willingness to debate
- Good at dealing with young people
- Empathising with older and/or vulnerable people
- Good at encouraging others to join in
- Respectful
- Ability to pinpoint the problem

## 8. TRAINING UNDERTAKEN SINCE 2007 ELECTIONS

Date	Name	Training
22/05/2007	Cllr Robert W Dudman	Induction Training by SALC
25/05/2007	Cllr Valerie Wright	"Chairing Scary Meetings" by Working Together Project, Hastings
05/06/2007	Cllr Caitlin Wheatley	Induction Training by SALC
04/07/2007	Pauline Raymond	Clerks' Training Day by SALC
23/07/2007	Pauline Raymond	Rother Clerks' Meeting
23/07/2007	Cllr Pauline Glew	Introduction to Planning by Rother/RALC
23/07/2007	Pauline Raymond	Introduction to Planning by Rother/RALC

## 9. PROPOSED TRAINING

**Planning.** Cllrs Wheatley and Dudman would like planning training. However, neither was able to attend the session on 23/07/07 when Rother's Chief Planning Officer gave a Powerpoint Presentation to parish councils and clerks. Handouts were provided. The Powerpoint Presentation has been obtained for showing in Sedlescombe. It is expected that this will be followed by brief training on Sedlescombe Parish Council's Planning Policy given by the Clerk. [Proposed time – 2 hours, September 2007]

**How Sedlescombe Parish Council manages Council Taxpayers' money** – see para. 4.2 above. Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer. [Proposed time – 2 hours, last quarter of 2007]

**Hands on the Sedlescombe Parish Council website.** Clerk. [Proposed time 1½ hours, last quarter of 2007]

**How to chair a meeting.** Clerk/Chairman. [Proposed time – ½ hour, first quarter of 2008]

**The purpose of the Annual Assembly of the Parish Meeting.** Clerk. [Proposed time – ½ hour, January 2008]

## 10. OTHER TRAINING

From time to time, other training opportunities arise and the Clerk will ensure that members are alerted to these opportunities. Where appropriate village voluntary groups will also be alerted.

The “Managing Challenging Behaviour” and “Conflict Resolution” courses will be arranged by A-Z Education Training on behalf of the ESCC Children’s Services Workforce Development Group, free of charge. Booking is essential and if you do not attend a £25 fee will be charged. Travel and carer costs can be reimbursed. Contact 01435 830411 or e-mail [a.zoffice@btinterenet.com](mailto:a.zoffice@btinterenet.com).

The Introduction to “Child Protection” and “Child Protection and Safeguarding for small organisations” courses will be arranged by Safety Net on behalf of the ESCC Children’s Services Workforce Development Group, free of charge. Booking is essential and if you do not attend a £25 fee will be charged. Travel and carer costs can be reimbursed. Contact 01273 696622 or e-mail [info@safety-net.org.uk](mailto:info@safety-net.org.uk).

Conflict Resolution	Monday 10 September 2007	1830-2100	Uckfield Civic Centre	Dealing with conflict between adult members of a team, staff, volunteers, trustees
Conflict Resolution	Tuesday 18 September 2007	1830-2100	The Bridge Centre, Hastings	Dealing with conflict between adult members of a team, staff, volunteers, trustees
Managing Challenging Behaviour	Thursday 20 September 2007	1600-1830	Uckfield Civic Centre	Ideas and strategies for supporting positive behaviour in groups and dealing with aggression and challenging behaviour in young people
Managing Challenging Behaviour	Monday 24 September 2007	1830-2100	Battle Memorial Hall	Ideas and strategies for supporting positive behaviour in groups and dealing with aggression and challenging behaviour in young people
Conflict Resolution	Thursday 27 September 2007	1600-1830	Action in rural Sussex, Lewes	Dealing with conflict between adult members of a team, staff, volunteers, trustees
Introduction to Child Protection and Safeguarding	Monday 1 October 2007	1600-1900	Action in rural Sussex, Lewes	Covering the basics of child protection and keeping children and young people safe. Ideal for volunteers, new staff and trustees in organisations working with children and young people
Managing Challenging Behaviour	Wednesday 3 October 2007	1830-2100	The Bridge Centre, Hastings	Ideas and strategies for supporting positive behaviour in groups and dealing with aggression and challenging behaviour in young people

Introduction to Child Protection and Safeguarding	Monday 8 October 2007	1830-2130	EAVS, Eastbourne	Covering the basics of child protection and keeping children and young people safe. Ideal for volunteers, new staff and trustees in organisations working with children and young people
Child Protection and Safeguarding for Small Organisations	Monday 8 October 2007	1230-1700	Hastings Voluntary Action	A longer session ideal for those that are new to child protection but need to think about it across their organisation, or who need a more than basic knowledge

The following free courses have been arranged by Uckfield Volunteer & Information Centre. Bookings through Sarah Ellis on 01825 760019 or [uvic@btconnect.co](mailto:uvic@btconnect.co)

Volunteer Involving Organisations	Wed 12 September 2007	1000-1600	Rye Adult Education Centre	Recruiting, retaining and supporting volunteers. Consideration of standard Countywide procedure for dealing with volunteers.
Volunteer Involving Organisations	Thurs 13 September 2007	1000-1600	Uckfield Civic Centre	As above
Volunteer Involving Organisations	Wed 19 September 2007	1000-1600	Hailsham George Hotel	As above
Volunteer Involving Organisations	Thurs 20 September 2007	1000-1600	Battle Memorial Hall	As above

The following course is available through the Campaign to Protect Rural England. It costs £25 each for Sedlescombe (member).

The Planning System How it Works	Wednesday 17 October 2007	1000-1600	Rotherfield Village Hall, North Street, Rotherfield TN6 4LX	Back to basics course
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